3.1.0 The Protean Wo/Man is constantly engaged in a desperate struggle to retain a proper sense and form of identity. Paradoxically, his apparent sense of identity is a fluid establishment between fixity and mobility. And though the flexible postmodern milieu seems to provide him the appropriate foil to suit his temperament, s/he often realises that he could not catch on with the quick and ever changing nature. At these moments, s/he becomes weak and immobile and his/her identity, consequently, becomes pathological. Most of the Protean hero/ines of Barth and Pynchon are cripples; physically, emotionally, mentally and psychologically. The maladies they suffer are peculiar and chronic in nature. But neither do they seem to bother the cause of their diseases nor do they care to find suitable remedies. Further, they let the sickness permeate the atmosphere and propitious individuals catch the syndrome.

3.1.1 The Protean populace of the writers, selected for this study, suffer from one disease or the other. To cite a few cases, Todd Andrews, in The Floating Opera, suffers from subacute bacteriological endocarditis with a tendency to myocardial infraction. That is, he suffers from a heart disease and always exists in an imminent danger of death. Further, he has got a chronic infection of the prostrate gland and tonsillitis. Remarkably, David Morrell observes that the character on whom Todd is modelled--Tristram--also suffered from consumption (1976, 3). Most of the other characters in the same novel are
also sick. Captain Osborn Jones is crippled by arthritis and bears with acute sinusitis. Clara Mulloy endures laryngitis. Haecker suffers from tuberculosis. The senior Harrison Mack’s physical well being deteriorates through arthritis to leukemia. In his final stages he was known for marked eccentricity to gibbering idiosyncrasy. Both Ebenezer Cook and Joan Toast in The Sot Weed Factor suffer from pox. Stencil in V, in his sleepless but obsessive quest after the mysterious V, is unaware of the insomnia he suffers from. However, the authors under study do not show their concern for these physical ailments as such but for their para-psychological and philosophical implications. They consider them as particular symptoms of the universal finalities: ‘Entropy’ and ‘Cosmopsis.’

3.2.0 The word ‘entropy’ was first used by Rudolf Clausius, taken from Greek word troopee meaning ‘transformation.’ He used the word in relation to the transformation of energy in his study of thermodynamics. Thermodynamics is the science which deals with the relations between heat and work and those properties of systems that bear relation to heat and work. A system in thermodynamics is defined as a definite quantity of matter of fixed mass and identity which is bounded by a closed surface. A closed system is a system that is completely isolated and is not connected in any way with any other system.

3.2.1 The first law of thermodynamics states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed but can be transformed from one form to another. This implies that while carrying out a process, heat and work are mutually convertible. And leads to the assumption that processes are reversible; that every change of thermodynamic state can proceed in any direction. But such events do not take place in nature. All spontaneous process in nature occurs only in one direction from a higher to a lower potential. The
second law of thermodynamics indicates the direction in which a process takes place. As stated by Clausius: "It is impossible for the heat energy to flow spontaneously from a body at lower temperature to a body at a higher temperature" (qtd. Ballanay 1993, 112).

3.2.2 Lot of conclusions follow from this statement. For instance, it can be stated that any system which tries to convert energy into useful work will inevitably lose or waste some energy in doing so, and so will gradually run down and eventually stop. Entropy refers to this irreversible tendency of a system toward increasing disorder and inertness. Precisely, it means the measure of disorder in a closed system. The closed system can be a heat engine, a human being, a culture, galaxy or anything. In L. Rastrigin’s opinion, “... all closed systems gradually become disorganized, decay, and die. In engineering practice this process is often called depreciation; in biology--aging; in chemistry--decomposition; in sociology--decay; in history--decline” (1984, 43).

3.3.0 ‘Cosmopsis’ is Barth’s ludicrous version of entropy. A portmanteau word coined from ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘psychosis,’ the term indicates a psychological malady. A cosmopolitan belongs to all parts of the world; not restricted to any one country or its inhabitants. And psychosis is a severely disordered or diseased state of mind. In this manner, the person who suffers from cosmopsis grapples with a cosmic awareness; that is all things are possible and equally tenable, so, he does not find himself on a rational ground to choose one particular idea and act. Because he sees the possibilities of everything, he feels nothing for anything. Cosmopsis is a disease of too much imagination, too much consciousness, and it paralyses the mind as well as the body. It is in the state of immobility, the cosmoptic individual becomes entropic.
3.3.1 Tony Tanner opines that 'entropy' has lot of implications in contemporary literature. Especially, it seems to have pervaded into the whole of contemporary American sensibility. She lists John Barth and Thomas Pynchon, along with Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow, John Updike, Walker Percy, Stanley Elkin, Donald Barthelme, as writers who have actually used the word. She goes on to trace further those writers who are apprehensive about the term without using the word in their works. This includes William Burroughs, Susan Sontag and even Charles Dickens and Alexander Pope (1971, 141-142). Since the focus of this study pertains to the writers selected, the following pages contain an analysis of their works in accordance with the implications of entropy as stated by Tanner.

3.3.2 The approach these writers have towards the second law of thermodynamics is sometimes optimistic but most of the times, pessimistic. Entropy, above all, is about the fate of energy; its running down and its final decline in the Universe. And the fact that while energy cannot be created but entropy can be created and that the entropy of the Universe always tends to a maximum, situates the contemporary writers in a gloomy atmosphere. “In a very real sense,” Norbert Wiener observes, “We are shipwrecked passengers of a doomed planet” (1954, 40). Thus, taken in this broadest apocalyptic sense, Tanner states that, “… entropy could be appropriately applied to those works … which foretell the doom of a present civilization or society” (1971, 142). And as Speer Morgan vividly pictures it,

Entropy is more elaborate than the concept of simple death, since it implies not just the dead end of morality but a wearing away and increasing disorganisation
through loss of heat. Entropy may be more fearful than death in certain ways, since it applies to all that we know, from the suns down to the living creatures, the molecules, and very atoms. It is universal sentence to extended death which through its very absoluteness carries greater horror than the Biblical curse of mortality (1977, 204).

3.3.3 Many critics till date consider Pynchon and Barth the apostles of the apocalypse. Not that they forebode the decline of energy in their works but it is the approach they have for their profession that spurs critics into activity. They are categorised under ‘the black humorist’ and ‘the death of the author’ group. And they are apprehensive of a sense of ending. Barth’s titles as “The Literature of exhaustion” and The End of the Road are to this effect. Like T. S. Eliot and others, the early Pynchon was sandwiched between the second world war and the depression period. Tanner conjectures that Pynchon started with the depression and he never got over with it (1982, 18). The despondency of the writers permeates the whole atmosphere of their works and sets the decorum. And the sharing of this noxious mood is individual as well as universal.

3.3.4.1 The apocalypse is prophetic about ‘the end’ but not an end in itself. Brilliantly, John Barth’s first novel, The Floating Opera is not about death but about almost-death. The novel gets written by the writer-narrator-protagonist as he commences his enquiry on his father’s suicide while he himself premeditates the same since he is on the verge of death. But before we get to know all the details, he sets our perspective:

Todd Andrews is my name. You can spell it with one or two d’s; I get letters addressed either way. I almost warned you against the single-d spelling, for
fear you’d say, “Tod is German for death; perhaps the name is symbolic.” I myself use two d’s, partly in order to avoid that symbolism. But you see, I ended by no warning you at all, and that’s because it just occurred to me that the double-d Tod is symbolic, too and accurately so, Tod is death, and this book hasn’t much to do with death, Tod is almost Tod—that is, almost death—and this book, if it gets written, has very much to do with almost-death (FO 3)

3 3 4 2 The novel is about two suicides one of the protagonist’s father, and the other of the protagonist himself—one that has happened and the other to happen, or about why one has happened and why the other do not happen The father’s happened on Ground-Hog Day, 1930, in the basement of the family home. The ostensible motive for the suicide was that the person had gone bankrupt in the crash of 1929 and could not face his creditors. But Tod did not accept that as the actual reason, and so he began preparing to write an enquiry into the death of his father. He wrote another self-enquiry, The Floating Opera is part of it, composing it in 1954 in his room in the Dorset Hotel, Cambridge, Maryland, and his topic is a June day in 1937 when he decided to kill himself and then changed his mind. He decided to kill himself because of the fatal heart disease he suffers from.

3 3 4 3 Tod explains his motive behind his going to John Hopkins and enrolment in the pre-law curriculum and joining fraternity “It seemed to me,” he says, “that nearly all of my fraternity brothers expected, like myself, to fall dead any moment, for they lived each day as though it were to be their last. Their way of life suited my feelings exactly” (emphases added) (FO 129) Similarly, Holiday Hopkinson, his ninety-year-old-
neighbour, “sleeps fully dressed, her arms folded funerally upon her chest, so as to cause, by her dying, the least possible trouble for anybody” (emphases added) (FO 50). She awaits death at any moment like Todd’s fraternity. We also hear about the death of senior Harrison Mack and Haecker; the latter, actually commits suicide by taking sleeping pills. Thus almost all in the novel share the author’s preoccupation with death.

3.3.5 One of the possible interpretations of Pynchon’s ‘V.’ is that it represents ‘violence’ and that Pynchon has conceived V. as an entropic agent of death. The activities of Victoria Wren as spy contribute to the wars that destroy man. In fact, it is the mysterious death of Herbert Stencil at Malta while he was in his quest after V., provokes Sidney Stencil for the search on which the main plot revolves. Like Pynchon’s V., Barth had originally conceived Todd Andrews as an agent of Death. Morrell says:

In 1955, when Barth was working on the novel, he arranged for Todd to try to kill himself in a dramatic and grisly fashion. He had him board a showboat where during a minstrel show Todd slipped backstage, switched on some gas jets, and then returned to watch the players and to wait for the explosion that would blast apart himself and 699 fellow townspeople, many of them his friends (1976, 6-7).

3.3.6 All these agents plan such mass deaths. Not satisfied with his agents of death, Pynchon further adds a list of “Disasters” from an Almanac. He reports:

Fifteen were killed in a train wreck near Kanara, Mexico, on 1 July. The next day fifteen people died when an apartment house collapsed in Madrid. July 4 a bus fell into a river in Karachi and thirty-one passengers drowned. Thirty-nine
more were drowned two days later in a tropical storm in the central Philippines.

9 July the Aegean Islands were hit by an earth quake and tidal waves, which killed forty-three . . . (V 290).

And so on. The list ends on 27 August including different Catastrophes that consumed about five thousand lives.

3.3.7 Always the preoccupation with death need not be a grisly affair. Henry Burlingame, in The Sot-weed Factor, with a remarkable consciousness for death, urges Ebenezer to affirm life and plunge into action. As he says: “We are all of us rushing headlong to the grave. Think you the worms will care, when anon they make a meal of you, whether you spent your moment sighing wigless in your chamber, or sacked the golden towns of Montezuma? . . . we are dying men, Ebenezer: i’ faith, there’s time for naught but bold resolves!” (SWF 25). However, the unpleasant image of ‘the worms’ making a meal of the body is more suggestive of the cold dying process and the horror it envelops.

3.3.8 Images of decaying flesh fill The Floating Opera too. As Charles Harris points out, they become obsessively linked in Todd Andrews’s imagination (1977, 35). When Todd discovers his father hanged in the basement, his father’s physical condition obsesses him. He notes almost compulsively the “black and ruptured flesh” (FO 183). His father’s ravaged flesh recalls one of Todd’s earliest memories, the “cold, hard, dirty, stringy, scaly, dead yellow feet” (FO 184) of a chicken his father had killed when Todd was five. Again, as Harris puts it, “Todd focuses intently on the feel of the dead flesh, the string of
adjectives used to describe that flesh reflecting the compulsive nature of a memory that, fifty years later, still makes him ill" (35).

3.3.9 In Pynchon, the preoccupation with death is often expressed as a grim sardonic premonition of its final assertion. Be it when Da Conho, in V, wonders, “how American Jews could sit vainglorious in that dining room meal after meal while only halfway round the world the desert shifted over corpses of their own” (V 23); or when Father Fairing in the same novel foresees “nothing but a city of starved corpses, covering the sidewalks and the grass of the parks, lying belly up in the fountains, hanging wrynecked from the street camps” (V 118), Pynchon would not spare a moment when he can emphasise the ominous presence of death. Even when the New York Sewer Department discovers the journal of Father Fairing, the author describes that “It lay on the top of a brick, stone and stick cairn [he does not stop here but continues to say] large enough to cover a human corpse . . .” (emphases added) (V 120). The addition of the corpse image may appear an unwarranted intrusion, yet it only proves the author’s obsessive vision of the apocalypse.

3.3.10 Pynchon’s first short story, “Entropy,” with its emblematic title, deals with Gibbs’s notion of the Universe—a vision of the ultimate, cosmic heat death. Callistro, the protagonist fears its eventual consequence: “Something like limbo: form and motion abolished, heat-energy identical at every point in it” (SL 85). Hence he seals himself hermetically inside a hothouse jungle with his girl friend and a dying sparrow. In fact, the sparrow dies in the end as Callistro could not transfer the heat of his body to the bird. This also heralds the eventual ‘apocalypse showdown’ (SL 18). Death is also the climatic point in Barth’s The End of the Road when Rennie Morgan shockingly dies during
abortion. However, it can serve the beginning of a story as in *The Crying of Lot 49* where the death of one Pierce Inverarity makes Oedipa Mass the executrix of his will and set 'the marvelous plot afoot.'

3.3.11.1 Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* has in its fulcrum the V-2 German rockets which could kill human beings on a large scale before they are aware of it. This is largely because it travels faster than the speed of sound and hits before it screams. The foreboding of the apocalyptic showdown in the epigraph of Pynchon's first short story, "Entropy"—"There will be more calamities, more death, more despair. Not the slightest indication of a change anywhere... we must get into step, a lockstep towards the prison of death. There is no escape" (SL 81).--is more pronounced in *Gravity's Rainbow.* Here: "Death has come in the pantry door: stands watching them, iron and patient, with a look that says try to tickle me" (GR 60). Mark R. Siegel explains that even the title is indicative of this: "As a title, *Gravity's Rainbow* indicates the natural, inevitable process of death; the life of man, like the life of a rocket, is an ascent which seems to promise transcendence but which is betrayed by the law of gravity to a final descent" (1977, 48). A minor character at one point in *Gravity's Rainbow* attempts to convince his associates "that their feelings about blackness were tied to feelings about shit and feelings about shit to feelings about putrefaction and death" (GR 276). "Nevertheless," Seed observes, "the connections recur again and again in the novel and raise the appalling possibilities that western culture is devoted to death..." (1988, 169).
Therefore we find a range of copropholons to urolagnists and copropagists in Barth and Pynchon. Profane's boss Zeitsuss is proud of those people "who live in human shit and alligator blood eight hours a day." (V 115). Similar to Profane's sewer water experiences, Slothrop gets into a chance experience when his mouthharp falls into the toilet bowl. To follow the harp down the toilet, he gets into the tunnel. There he finds himself "uncannily shit-sensitized." This newly acquired sensitivity is so extraordinary that, "he finds he can identify certain traces of shit as belonging definitely to this or that Harvard fellow of his acquaintances. Some of it too of course must be Negro shit, but that all looks alike" (emphases added) (GR 65).

Involved in his pursuit further, Slothrop fails to notice a sudden surge of the tunnel water and hence is forced to confront with it,

... he tries a feeble from kick at the very last moment but already the cylinder of waste has wiped him out, dark as cold beef gelatin along his upper backbone, the paper snapping up, wrapping across his lips, his nostrils, everything gone and shit-stinking now as he had to keep batting micro-turds out of his eyelashes, it's worse than being torpedoed by Japs! the brown liquid tearing along, carrying him helpless... (GR 66).

On the surface people are mad to identify the traces of trajectories to save themselves from the ultimate anonymity that mass death would render them. Inside the tunnel one of Pynchon's characters is equally immersed in an activity to trace out faeces and their respective disposers. By this brilliant juxtaposition, Pynchon wants to reveal that the ultimate anonymity can come not only from furnaces and mass graves but also from
tunnels and toilet elements. As Seed points out: “The prominence of toilets and the repetition of the bodily functions associated with them insist on man’s physical vulnerability and also in the inescapability of his physical existence” (1988, 171).

3.4.2 If Slothrop’s coprophilia comes out of an accident, Brigadier Ernest Pudding, an eighty year old director of “The White Visitation,” chooses urolagnia and coprophilia out of will. He does it to eliminate his feeling of guilt at sending men to their deaths in the Passchendal trenches through a pornographic ritual of humiliation. Pynchon spends not less than two pages to describe this activity in the twenty-fifth Chapter of Gravity’s Rainbow. Seed explains the significance of the act in the following words:

He passes through a series of cells which embody imagistic variations on his state, (death, shame, humiliation, etc.) and then performs urolagnia and coprophagy with Katje acting the role of witch or Domina Nocturna. Within this general dominance of black the Brigadier performs a submission to death where physical disgust takes on a transcendent significance through a stark visual contrast between black and white: ‘A dark turd appears out of the crevice, out of the absolute darkness between her white buttocks’ (235). By eating Katje’s faeces he is partaking of death, symbolically sharing the fate of the men he loved (1988, 171).

As Paul Fussell remarks: “It is a fantastic scene, disgusting, ennobling and touching, all at once” (1978, 218). Pudding, we are told later, died in June, 1945, “of a massive E. coli infection” (GR 533) brought about by these rituals of coprophagic sessions. And
yet what he was “tasting” and “devouring” all the time was his memories of the Great War.

3.4.3 In Barth’s The Floating Opera, Senior Mack is another character who cherishes coprophilia in his senility. He hoards his final months’ stools in one hundred and twenty-nine pickle jars and includes them as valued items in his three-million-dollar will. He acquires a sort of mania to preserve them and permits none to be destroyed. He even threatens to disinherit his wife and son if they fail to obey his wishes. But the connotation of this perversive act is quite appalling. The fluid storage medium that he has chosen to preserve his faeces is the pickle jar. It is these pickle jars that once gained the Mack wealth, power and identity but now the Mack’s faeces float, too, in the same jars. That is, perhaps, how Harrison Mack visualises the fluidity of his identity as a mock ‘floating opera.’

3.4.4 But as Eugene Korkowski points out, “The most intrepid excremental vision in The Floating Opera is, of course, Barth’s more than Todd’s” (1977, 58) or Mack’s. For Barth it is exemplary to indicate the volatile and nauseating nature of a fragmented identity in the postmodern world. Barth visualises life as a broken episode; the floating opera that one can watch from a riverbank never seeing more than the bit played before his/her particular spot. Thus when life itself makes only a fragmented sense, the characters that represent Barth’s sense of life can only be a compilation of ideas, roles and terms. The individual mind, as Partick O’Neill conjectures, “ceases to be the organizing centre ... and becomes instead a mere buffeted scrap of flotsam carried
along willy-nilly on a current it can do nothing or little to control” (emphasis added) (1990, 15).

3.5.0 Nevertheless, the import of these works lies not in their enumeration of physical death, but in their metaphorical significance. All the characters develop a nihilistic attitude subscribing to the ultimate pointlessness of life. Nihilism was the theme that Barth chose for his novel The Floating Opera. So fascinated was he in fact that, having finished his book about it, he planned to write a series of them dramatizing various nihilistic attitudes. But they would, all have one similar character, “Some sort of bachelor, more or less irresponsible, who rejects absolute values or encounters their rejection.” The Floating Opera was his “nihilistic comedy” and the bachelor he presented in it was Todd Andrews (Morell 1976, 1). And while it is a premeditated suicide, it is the consciousness of the act that offers him a point to reject it. Todd Andrews, initially, convinces himself that nothing has intrinsic value, including life, hence suicide is the only logically valid act. But when he does not succeed in killing himself, he rethinks his notions and finally decides that if there is no reason to stay alive there is no reason to commit suicide either.

3.5.1 The End of the Road is Barth’s sequel to the The Floating Opera, which he labelled as his ‘nihilistic tragedy.’ And the bachelor he presented here was Jacob Horner. “In fact,” as Jacquelyn Kegley observes, “the novel opens with the theme of his fluidity and non-identity. ‘In a sense, I am Jacob Horner’” (1984, 119). “The qualification of the opening phrase suggests that the ‘I’ is one of many. At the moment of speaking he may be who he says, but at another moment he may be someone else, though he keeps the same name” (Majdiak 1980, 97). Barth intended that his hero should remind us first of all of
little Jack Horner, who also sits in a corner and rationalises. Jacob Horner rationalises too much that he often finds simple choices terribly difficult. If possible he would choose everything, but if not possible he would be caught in the tug and pull of opposing forces, in a short time paralysed. Horner thus becomes a perfect victim of "Cosmopsis, the cosmic view" (ER 69). He is first afflicted by it on the day after his twenty-eighth birthday when he finds he no longer has convincing reasons to continue attending graduate school or doing anything else he has been committed to. He goes to railroad station and asks the ticket agent what places he can ride for twenty dollars, all the money he has to spare, and as he considers the list of cities given to him, cosmopsis strikes. "So I left the ticket window and took a seat on one of the benches in the middle of the concourse to make up my mind. And it was there that I simply ran out of motives, as a car runs out of gas. . . . There was no reason to do anything" (ER 73). He sits catatonic on the bench for twenty-four hours until a negro doctor finds him and takes him to his Remobilisation Farm for therapy.

3.5.2 Like Horner, Todd sometimes is not convinced of the value of any idea and rests immobilised. Todd says:

There was no reason to open my mouth as there was no reason to do anything and I'll say that the realization of this worked upon me involuntarily. This is important it was that I decided not to speak, but that aware in every part of me of the unjustifiable nature of action, and completely subject as I was then to the operation of my reasoning, I simply could not open my mouth; my arms and legs would not move. An amazing helplessness . . . I was simply paralyzed (FO
3.5.3 In The Sot-weed Factor, Barth begins the situation much like in The End of the Road. Ebenezer Cooke is taught by Henry Burlingame to be fascinated by the multiplicity of the Universe, and he comes to have so wide an imagination that he cannot choose a career. All the possibilities are equally attractive but not finally inviting. Soon he is incapable of simpler choices. He languishes in his room, smoking and reading, then no longer prowling. Eventually, neither dressing nor eating, he stares vacantly out his window and cannot choose even to relieve his bladder:

For a week he simply languished in his rooms, reading distractedly and smoking pipe after pipe of tobacco, to which he would become addicted. At length reading became impossible, smoking too great a bother, he prowled restlessly about the room. His head always felt about to ache, but never began to. Finally one day he did not deign even to dress himself or eat, but say immobile in the window seat in his night shirt and started at the activity in the street below, unable to choose a motion at all even when, some hours later, his untutored bladder suggested one (SWF 11).

The symptoms are unmistakable: Ebenezer has turned into a seventeenth century Jacob Horner, he too is suffering from the dreaded malady cosmopsis. But this is the acute state of cosmopsis where excessive imagination overpowers even an instinctual or natural motion.

3.5.4 Horner too reaches the same condition towards the end of the novel, The End of the Road. He describes,
My rocking slowed to a nearly imperceptible movement...—my imagination no longer pictured anything. My bladder was full; I needed to go to the bathroom, but I didn’t go. After a while the urgency passed. I decided to try to say Pepsi-Cola hits the spot: but after the first couplet I forgot to say the rest.

The urge to urinate returned, more sharply than before. I would not decide to get up (ER 171).

The novel ends leaving Horner in a state of final entropy where any semblance to activity has no meaning. He even tries writing half a dozen letters but could finish none. He throws the notes away, sits still in his rocking chair. Like a true Becketian hero, he simply finds that there is “nothing else to do” (ER 170).

3.5.5 Horner appears again in Barth’s LETTERS. And like Saul Bellow’s Herzog, he is busy writing letters; one of which is addressed to himself. But as he himself admits, ‘in a sense,’ he still remains Jacob Horner. The Doctor assures this fact. He tells Horner: “You have Made NO Progress in eighteen years, Horner. You are the same vacuum I picked up in Baltimore in 1951, except that you have Gotten Older, and it took you longer than most of us to Do That. You will Be Here till you Die” (L 19). But Horner did not respond to any of the Doctor’s accusations.

3.6.0 On many occasions, when cosmopsis envelops these invalids, they spend lot of their time in their closed rooms looking vacantly at the wall. Even when others are soaked in some activities of life, Todd, for instance, says: “As for me, I stared at my wall... without reasoning on its empty surface a single idea” (FO 103). This activity/non-activity gains a symbolic dimension as it indicates the stillness the animate achieves in congruence
with the inanimate. This symbolic non-activity of the animate identifying its element with the inanimate gets enriched in cosmoptic surroundings. Hence, Horner keeps the bust of Laocoon statue that appears to stare at him menacingly. And at the first instance of cosmopsis, Horner compares himself with Greek statues: "My eyes, as Winckelmann said inaccurately of the eyes of the Greek statues, were sightless, gazing on eternity, fixed on ultimacy, and when that is the case there is no reason to do anything—even to change the focus of one's eyes" (ER 73).

Similarly, Oedipa Mass, in The Crying of Lot 49, in her mission to execute the will of her ex-lover, travels to a town near Los Angeles called San Narcisco. Later she stops at a hotel called Echo Courts, outside which there stands a huge metal statue of a nymph whose face was much like Oedipa's. This makes Oedipa apprehensive of something strange that is happening around her. Obviously, San Narciso and Echo Courts allude to Narcissus of the Greek legend, who rejected the nymph Echo and instead fell in love with his own image reflected in a pond. He died by falling into the water. Though such names suggest that Oedipa may be getting involved with some sort of reflection of herself, ironically enough, it is the statue of a nymph that reflects her face. Soon Oedipa falls an easy victim of cosmopsis. Pynchon describes: "That night she sat for hours, too numb even to drink, teaching herself to breathe in a vacuum... Old fillings in her teeth began to bother her. She would spend nights staring at a ceiling lit by the pink glow of San Narciso's sky. Other nights she could sleep for eighteen drugged hours and wake, enervated, hardly able to stand" (emphases added) (CL 171).
3.6.2 Not only these characters liken themselves to inanimate objects but slowly they disintegrate themselves to synthesise with the inanimate. At the surface level, we have characters whose names suggest an inanimate synthesis. In Barth’s *Tide Water Tales*, we come across “Chip” (Andrew Christopher “Chip” Sherritt). “The nickname comes not from his being off the old block; it is short for microchip and derives from his remarkable store of information,” (TWT 58) like, of course, the silicon chip of a computer. Of all the uncanny names of Pynchon, Morris Teflon is very striking since ‘teflon’ is a petrochemical product noted for its plasticity.

3.6.3 At a deeper level, individuals develop an excessive love for inanimate objects. Slab “always wore a hat, inside or outside, in bed or dead drunk” (V 57). Dudley Eigenvalue keeps in his showpiece of the office, “a set of false dentures, each tooth a different precious metal” (V 152). Da Conho, Profane’s Chief in the Navy, always carries a .30-Caliber machine gun in his bag. Profane’s girlfriend Rachel cleans her car at midnight and he is surprised to see her converse with it in terms of sexual metaphors:

“You beautiful stud,” he heard her say, “I love to touch you.” Wha, he thought. “Do you know what I feel when we’re out on the road? Alone, just us?” She was running the sponge caressingly over its front bumper. “Your funny responses, darling, that I know so well. The way your brakes pull a little to the left, the way you start to shudder around 5000 rpm when you’re excited. And you burn oil when you’re mad at me, don’t you? I know” (V 28).

3.6.4 Thus inanimate objects provide perfect sex-surrogates when the animates are found inadequate. In Pynchon’s *V*., Mrs. Buffo, owner of a bar named Sailor’s Grave,
installs as part of her maternal policy, beer taps made of foam rubber in the shape of large breasts. From eight to nine, on pay-day nights, there is the Suck Hour that begins when Mrs. Buffo blows a pipe. At this signal, everyone would dive for and if they were lucky enough to reach one be given suck by a beer tap. There were seven of these taps, and an average of two hundred and fifty sailors are usually present for the merrymaking. Similarly, Profane plays games with other sailors in exchange of unused contraceptives.

3.6.5 While there are some who hold themselves by expressing their love for the inanimate, there are others who cannot withhold themselves and hence integrate with the inanimate. Pynchon’s Fergus Mixolydian, in V, succumbed to total ennui, has his sole amusement of watching the television. He had devised an ingenious sleep-switch, receiving its signal from two electrodes placed on the inner skin of his forearm. When Fergus dropped below a certain level of awareness, the skin resistance increased over a preset value to operate the switch. Fergus thus became an extension of the television set. In the same manner, Mucho Mass, a disc jockey, is considered “an antenna,” sending his pattern out across a million lives a night (CL 144). Another perfect illustration for the animate-inanimate integration is the story of Evan Godolphin in V. Evan Godolphin could be brought back to life from his crippled plane only after the complete reconstruction of his body using inanimate organs by the doctors. “Thus Godolphin received a nose bridge of ivory, a cheekbone of silver and a paraffin and celluloid chin” (V 100). And above all these inanimate creatures, Benny Profane is described as ‘a human yo-yo.’ Yo-yo is a spool like toy with a string attached to the pin holding its two halves.
together: it may be reeled up and then let down by manipulating the string. Profane is such an inanimate thing to be toyed at both ends.

3 6.6 Pynchon himself mourns the slow disintegration of the animate into the inanimate. He says:

In the eighteenth century it was convenient to regard man as a clockwork automaton. In the nineteenth century, with Newtonian physics pretty well assimilated and a lot of work in thermodynamics going on, man was looked on more as a heat-engine, about 40 per cent efficient. Now in the twentieth century, with nuclear and subatomic physics a going thing, man had become something which absorbs X-rays, gamma rays and neutrons (V 284).

But the twentieth century specimens that Pynchon depicts can be called ‘Men’ only in an inanimate sense.

3.6.7.1 Profane comes across these specimens in Anthroresearch Associates, a robot factory, where he works as a night watchman. They are named SHROUD and SHOCK. SHROUD is “Synthetic human, radiation output determined,” whose features lit like Frankenstein’s monster is precisely, “an animated corpse” (V 284). Pynchon describes as follows:

Its skin was cellulose acetate butyrate, a plastic transparent not only to light but also to x-rays, gamma rays and neutrons. Its skeleton had once been that of a living human; now the bones were decontaminated and the long ones and spinal column hollowed inside to receive radiation dosimeters. . . . the lungs, sex
organs, kidneys, thyroid, liver, spleen and other internal organs were hollow
and made of the same clear plastic as the body shell (V 284).

3.6.7.2 SHOCK is ‘Synthetic human object’ and a marvelous manikin. “It had the same
build as SHROUD but its flesh was molded of foam vinyl, its skin vinyl plastisol, its hair a
wig, its eyes cosmetic-plastic. . . ” (V 285). It has rheostat controls for venous and
arterial bleeding, pulse rate, and even respiration rate. It has been provided with plastic
lungs for necessary suction and bubbling. SHOCK was thus entirely lifelike in every way.

Profane feels a certain kinship with these synthetic robots. He even develops imaginary
conversations. Paradoxically, it is one such conversation that he has with SHROUD that
is central to the novel as well as this chapter. SHROUD forebodes:

Me and SHOCK are what you and everybody will be someday (the skull
seemed to be grinning at Profane).

“What do you mean, we will be like you and SHOCK someday? you mean
dead?”

Am I dead? If I am then that’s what I mean.

“If you aren’t then what are you?”

Nearly what you are. None of you have very far to go.

“I don’t understand.”

So I see. But you’re not alone.

That’s a comfort isn’t it? (V 286-287).
The ‘shock’ing message is clear that soon the Universe is to be ‘shroud’ed on mass by the entropic demon. And the only way to have a sense of animatedness is by losing oneself in the demon’s inanimate embrace.

3.6.8 Those who got the message already are in their transgression towards the inanimate. Right from the beginning of the novel V., Rachel’s inanimatedness is emphasised. When her car hits Profane, he “reflected that here was another inanimate object that had nearly killed him. He was not sure whether he meant Rachel or the car” (emphasis added) (V 24). Similarly, in one of the possible descriptions of V., she/it is considered, “a purely determined organism, an automaton, constructed, only quaintly of human flesh (emphasis added) (V 411). The word ‘constructed’ suggests that V. could be a fabricated mechanical device that can be easily disintegrated at one’s will.

3.6.9 V., being an automaton, falls in love for a girl, Melanie, who “dances for automata.” For V., the inanimate, Melanie, an animate, becomes a fetish. V. explains this to Melanie: “Do you know what a fetish is? Something of a woman which gives pleasure but is not a woman. A shoe, a locket . . . You are the same, not real but an object of pleasure” (V 404). The concept of fetish gets subverted here. Fetish is no more an inanimate object of the animate but the animate object that which serves the function of an inanimate. Further, it bears repetition to note that Rachel’s excessive love for her car is also a fetish act in reverse; the car is not a metaphoric image of an object of pleasure, it is the object that gives pleasure.

3.6.10 At this stage, V. also becomes aware of her own progression toward inanimatedness, “. . . by journeying even deeper into a fetish country until she became
entirely and in reality—not merely as a love-game with any Melanie—an inanimate object of desire (V 411). The complete transition is presented in Stencil's vision of her at age of seventy six,

skin radiant with the bloom of some new plastic; both eyes glass but now containing photo electric cells, connected by silver electrodes to optic nerves of purest copper wire and leading to a brain exquisitely wrought as a diode matrix could even be. . . even a complex system of pressure transducers located in a marvelous vagina of polyethylene leading to a single silver cable which fed pleasure--voltages direct to the correct register of the digital machine in her skull (V 412).

3.6.11 By becoming more and more inanimate, one move "closer to the time when like any dead leaf or fragment of metal they would be finally subject to the law of physics" (V. 321). In one of V.'s incarnations, V. becomes such a "fragment of metal" in the form of the mercury lamps overhead, "receding in an asymmetric V to the cast where it's dark and there are no more bars" (V 10). Charles B. Harris offers an ingenuous interpretation for this form of V. in terms of its entropic association. He says,

In both shape and significance, the lamp suggests Jacob Bronowski's comparison of the future to a stream of gas shot from a nozzle. The farther the gas jet is propelled, the more diffuse become its molecules. Like wise, as time progresses, our system becomes less organized and its structure more and more random. Like the green V's of the lamps. Benny perceives on East Main, time propels itself inexorably onward toward darkness and inertia (1971, 82).
These mercury-vapour lamps merge with the sinister apprehension of Profane since they happen to “turn everybody’s face green and ugly.” Pynchon’s V. gazes the entire humanity at the apocalyptic verge where entropy proceeds towards the closing ceremony.

3.6.12 Barth’s inanimate equivalent to Pynchon’s V. is WESCAC, the remarkable computer that seems to have written even the proper text of Giles Goat Boy. George, the eponymous character of the novel, is another experimental child like Slothrop. His childhood has been chronicled in the Journal of Experimental Psychology. But the difference between Slothrop and George is that, the experiment of George has been executed by the super-computer, WESCAC. It is empowered to create goat-boys. But the latest development is that its reasoning had been influenced by lust. “Dr. Eierkopf’s delight (and Max’s despair) was that WESCAC had met his first prerequisite of Grand Tutorship: for better or worse its mind was now unmistakable, embarrassingly, irrevocably human” (GGB 65). Barth does not stop only by attributing human qualities to an inanimate computer but he gives it superhuman qualities by making it omnipotent—endowed with the power of creating and destruction. It has its AIM (Automatic Implementation Mechanism) which helps it to EAT ( Electrocephalic Amplification Transmission) the brains of human beings and debilitate their well-being so as to subjugate them to its control.

3.6.13.1 The inanimate as the creator and the destroyer is also the major concern for Pynchon in Gravity’s Rainbow. The German V-2 rocket is both a gigantic phallic symbol as well as a messenger of Death: “Beyond simple steel erection, the Rocket was an entire system won, away from the feminine darkness, held against the entropies of lovable but
scatter brained Mother Nature” (GR 324). Pynchon opens *Gravity’s Rainbow* with the explosion of a rocket bomb beyond the predictions of entropologists: “A screaming comes across the sky. It has happened before, but there is nothing to compare it now.” For Pirate Prentice: “It is too late. . . . No light anywhere. . . . He’s afraid of the way the glass will fall—soon—it’ll be a spectacle: the fall of a crystal palace” (GR 3).  

3.6.13.2 But Pirate Prentice is only dreaming; and when he wakes up the nightmare is yet to baffle him. For in reality, the V-2 rocket that appears as a brilliant point of light in the pink morning sky does not scream. “He won’t hear the thing come in. It travels faster than the speed of sound. The first news you get of it is the blast. Then, if you are still around, you hear the sound of it coming in . . .” (GR 7). The new rocket—which travels with unprecedented speed, confuses direction through time and space and denies the logic of common sense. It not only snaps continuity, it explodes virtually before it arrives. According to Litz, “Pynchon confronts the paradox that Adams only began to glimpse: of a ‘new world’ that is absolutely anarchic and yet totally governed by an impersonal order” (1981, 678).  

3.7.0 Such an impersonal order is bearable only for the inanimate. Hence many images are being used to suggest the animate turning into the inanimate. Of the images used, ‘rock’ is crucially significant. Used as a ‘noun,’ it is the last word for an inanimate object that would indicate stillness. Such a stillness that is characteristic of the entropic/cosmoptic beings. Those who have the propensity for stillness find comfort in rocky atmosphere.
In this manner, Rachel takes Profane to an abandoned rock quarry. For Profane it was an uncomfortable afternoon, but it was there, surrounded by the scattered irregular chunks of stone, Rachel requests Profane to be her friend.

She said: “no Bennigton, no Schlozhauer’s, and no Five Towns. Only this quarry; the dead rocks that were here before us and will be after us.” . . . She sitting back of the right-hand steering wheel and talking, talking, nothing but MG-words, inanimate words he couldn’t really talk back at (emphases added) (V 26).

Similarly, Rachel’s friend Esther, who undergoes a nose surgery, re-accounts her surgery as a mystic experience. But according to her, such an experience meant achieving stillness. She defines: “It was almost a mystic experience. What religion is it—–one of the Eastern ones—–where the highest condition we can attain is that of an object—a rock. It was like that . . . ( V 106). The plastic surgeon and her lover, Shale Shoenmaker, certifies the fact in one of his love songs about his sweet heart: “She never acts nasty /But lies still as a rock” (emphases added) (V 110).

When V. comes as Victoria Wren, a British spy, she is accompanied by her sister, Mildred, who is fond of collecting “rocks and fossils.” Victoria’s postures and movements too have an inanimate vein. For instance: “She wondered, standing stonestill at the crossroads” (V 199). V. is finally to be experienced by her/its questors in a mysterious place in the island of Malta named Vheissu. Although ‘inertness’ is associated in the novel to other places (V 64, 66) too, it is only in Vheissu it is totally emblematic. In the words of Old Godolphin: “The barrenness of that place howled around me, like a
country the demiurge had forgotten. There could have been no more entirely lifeless and empty place anywhere on earth” (V 205) (emphases added). And later: “If Eden was the creation of God, God only knows what evil created Vheissu... Vheissu itself a gaudy dream, of what the Antarctic in this world is closest to: a dream of annihilation” (V 206).

3.7.3 If Pynchon is obsessed with the word ‘rock’ in its noun form, Barth exploits the use of the word in its verb form. All these cosmoptic individuals sit in a rocking chair and rock endlessly while their eyes are fixed on a blank wall. Horner used to sit in his rocker and rocks whenever his mind was ‘empty.’ On one such occasion he says: “my mind was empty. All the way to the restaurant, all through the meal, all the way home, it was as though there were no Jacob Horner today. After I’d eaten I returned to my room sat in my rocker, and rocked, barely sentient, for a long time, thinking of nothing” (ER 36). Further when he violates the Doctor’s advice that he should not have sex with a woman, by having it with Rennie, and subsequently, goes back to his original state of inertia, he says: “I felt tortoise-like, even lichen-like, and left to myself, I’d have sat rocking in my chair, buried in comfortable torpidity, until bedtime” (ER 99).

3.7.4 This is comparable with the disillusioned and frustrated Greene of his campus activities, in Giles Goat Boy, who suffers a lengthy spell of profound inertia:

Sexually he became subject to periods of impotence; socially he withdrew, lost interest in the few friends he had left, as in himself. Whether he appeared well or ill in the public eye and his own no longer concerned him; he would not even manage to despise himself much, so thorough going was his sense of futility. Much of his time he spent rocking in a chair... Nothing in the University
mattered in the long run, . . . To rock the campus, to rock a chair--what did it matter? (GGB 237).

Although the ‘rocking’ should suggest a movement, here it really is without any progress emphasising further its rocky state of inertia, it is embedded with.

3.7.5 In like manner, in The Floating Opera, Captain Osborn and his colleagues of the loafer’s bench, suffer from a cosmoptic stationary motion. Barth describes them in the following words:

They ate food, wore clothing, and smoked cigars, but they produced nothing. They sat immobile on their antique bench like a row of crusty oysters and ingested with their eyes everything that passed, but they did not participate. The life of Cambridge passed by and through them like sea water through an oyster’s gills: they strained from it what nutrition they wanted as it passed, digesting people and events with a snort or a comment, but they never moved from their position. They were a chorus of ancient oysters, stolidly regarding the fish that swam through their ken. Their infrequent voices were slow, nasal, high-pitched, and senile (FO 112).

Although such activities as eating food, smoking cigars seem to suggest some movement, it is without any progress since “they produced nothing.” And they “sat immobile and let everything pass by, without moving from their position.” Further, they were lacking emotion or animation like the oyster with stolid regard for their surroundings. They cannot be easily moved or excited at all.
Pynchon often uses rain imagery to suggest entropic movement without progress. From his first short story to his magnum opus Gravity's Rainbow the rain continues to pour, splatter and stops scarcely. To cite an instance: “Outside there was rain. Rain splatted against the tar paper on the roof and was fractured into a fine spray off the noses, eyebrows and lips of wooden gargoyles under the eaves, and ran like drool down the window panes” (SL 82). But the too glaring use of rain imagery, unlike its conventional usage, does not suggest hope and renewal of energy but yet another monotonous and repetitions foreboding voice from the Apocalypse where everything in participation with the entropic process is literally running down, like of course, the clouds that shower rain till they squeeze out their lost drops and let the world suffer heat death. Further, apart from 'rain' Pynchon makes even the whole atmosphere getting puffed up by "the inanimate wind" (V 30) leading to “a chuff-chuff of inanimate breath” (V 80).

The protean wo/men and their surroundings represent some movement but they are so repetitious and/or circuitous that any sense of progress is merely an illusion. Tanner explains the paradox involved in this entropic movement without progress:

One of the apparent paradoxes of this tendency is that of movement leading to stillness. But there is a difference between the organic, constructive movement of something (or someone) burgeoning into a full realization of its inherent potential development and the sort of mindless repetitive motions that denote a gradual collapsing towards inertia and death (1971, 143).

“Where we are going,” Profane asks; “The way we’re heading,” says Pig, “Move your ass” (V 17). Benny Profane, Pig Bodine, Pappy Hod, Herbert Stencil, Evan
Godolphin, Hugh Godolphin, Paola Majistral, Victoria Wren, Vera Meroving, and Veronica Manganese 'move their asses' all over the place in Pynchon's first novel, *V*. -- continually going, or seeming to go, in no other direction than the way they are heading. They activate frantic movement leading to nowhere. "Indeed *V*. is about three kinds of movement that," as Litz observes, "when interconnected—or intercut—come together as unfocused, undirected, and ungovernable motion" (1981, 627). The following paragraphs illustrate the three kinds of movement Litz talks about.

3.8.2 The first kind of movement is exemplified by Benny Profane--a schlemiel and human yo-yo—who rides the shuttle back and forth, accepting whatever comes his way a job, a drink, a con, a fight, a trip to Malta. But he is always ready to cut loose when the connection becomes too secure. In a threatening world he maintains his equilibrium and a minimal identity by being constantly and aimlessly on the move. That the pattern of his movement is like a yo-yo suggests its psychological if not its geographical limits.

3.8.3 Opposed to Benny is Herbert Stencil, whose movement since 1945 has been constant but purposeful. "His random movements before the war had given way to a great single movement from inertness to—if not vitality, than at least activity. Work, the chase—for it was *V*. he hunted . . . for no other reason than that *V*. was there to track down" (*V* 55). The chase after *V*., with its ever-changing direction and elusive goal, allows Herbert Stencil to maintain his equilibrium in a world of space and time that reaches far beyond Benny's and to maintain a minimal identity—as a stencil. This is the second kind of movement that Litz mentions.

3.8.4 The third kind of movement in *V*. is manifest in the elder generation. Hugh
Godolphin is an explorer. Sidney Stencil is a foreign agent, who goes wherever Whitehall tell him, and who "with no element to be out of" is "at home everywhere"—except, finally, in Malta. Victoria Wren, Vera Meroving, Veronica Manganese—or V. ends up as an agent for Mussolini. Even more than Stencil, she has no element to be out of and is at home everywhere. Her movement comes to be defined as tourism: "... the tourist may wander anywhere in this coordinate system without rear. ... Tourism thus is supranatural, ... they share the same landscapes suffer the same inconveniences; live by the same pellucid time-scale. They are the street's own" (V 409).

3.8.5 "Tourism," as we find it implicitly amplified in V., is a constant movement with constancy changing direction. But it differs from Profane's yo-yoism and from young Stencil's chase of or search for V. in that it is not volitional, in that the motive energy does not come from within. Tourism is not a choice to escape or to pursue, but to abdicate choice. Abdication of choice and of control lead to the loss of direction: We do not know where the characters are going, we cannot tell the past from the present. By the end of V. there is a total confusion, or merging, of all moral directions, and we come to sense that the three different kinds of movement are one motion; the motion of unchecked energy. There is no difference among the choice of escape, the choice of pursuit, and the choice of giving up choices. To become a human yo-yo is as mindless as to pursue an elusive goal or to become a tourist, or to become an agent. Each choice is as mechanical or aimless or menacing as that as that of SHROUD or SHOCK. Thus Pynchon finally evolves, as Litz defines, "a novel of motion rather than of movement—a novel that abrogates direction, that
focuses on the senseless pattern of transformations that governs contemporary life” (1981, 627).

3.9.0 In general, the entropic tribe fall under two categories: the one, on the street and the other, in the hothouse. Those who are on the streets run down with the decline of energy; fearful of this the others, try to resist it by their withdrawal. The first kind is of the people, who are the questors and who are constantly running after something. Ebenezer is in a race to earn his estate and is also in search of his lost sister, Anna. Burlingame is in a quest to learn the identity of his father. Stencil is after V.. Oedipa is after mysterious signs and clues the significance of which she could not grasp till the end.

3.9.1 The second kind, are the hothouse characters who range from the sublime to the ludicrous. To cite few instances: Nathan Levine in Pynchon’s short story “Small Rain” has deliberately enlisted in the army. He is stationed at some desolate place of nowhere in Louisiana which he actually likes. He likes the inertia, the inaction, the repetition, the not having to think (he is a graduate from Cornell University, New York), and not having to feel. This type of cherished immunity from feeling is a dominant characteristic among these hothouse figures. Correspondingly, Callistro in “Entropy” builds a hothouse for himself, his girlfriend and a dying sparrow to resist entropy. A ridiculous version is represented by Pirate, in Gravity’s Rainbow, who driven to despair by the wartime banana shortage, builds a glass hothouse on the roof for bananas.

3.9.2 So long as man retains his essentially human nature, he can temporarily resist the general stream of corruption and decay in the Universe. Norbert Wiener terms such resistance from entropy “homeostasis.” Through this process, Harris observes, “Certain
organisms, such as man, tend for a time to maintain and often even to increase the level of their organisation, as a local enclave in the general stream of increasing entropy, of increasing chaos and de-differentiation” (1971, 84). Thus we also find a set of characters in Barth and Pynchon who attempt to resist entropy through their levels of organisation.

3.9.3 In Pynchon’s short story, “Entropy,” Meatball Mulligan, when a fight broke out in a party that goes on in his apartment, instead of hiding in the closet, decides to try to stop the fight. This way, “to try and keep . . . his party from deteriorating into total chaos,” is “more a pain in the neck, but probably better in the long run” (SL 291). Accordingly, we find a list of characters from V, who refuse to “drift into the graceful decadence of an enervated fatalism” (SL 283). This includes, Rachel, who is devoted to aiding the world’s “victims,” Paola Maijistral, who is able to love, and Paola’s father, Fausto, who manages to turn away from a state of inanimatedness toward one of humanity. There is also McClintic Sphere, black Jazz musician, who somewhat obtrusively delivers the novel’s coda: “Love with your mouth shut, help without breaking your ass or publicizing it; keep cool, but care” (V 365-66). Even Mafia; who proposes a Theory that the world can only be rescued from certain decay through Heroic Love. However, it is ironic that her name represents the formidable underworld Italian secret organisation ‘Mafia.’ While Barth’s Jacob Horner and Todd Andrews try to co-operate with the inevitable entropy in their nihilistic way, we find their homeostatic resisters also in the form of Joe Morgan and Jack Harrison. Horner has no values, against Morgan who holds the relative values of his marriage.

3.9.4 Where Norbert Wiener would describe conscious man as an enclave of anti-
entropy, Henry Adams prefers to stress that “the law of entropy imposes a servitude on all energies; including the mental.” In this regard, Tanner comments:

Like his creator he (American hero) wants to be a small counter force to the prevailing entropic tendencies. The difficulty lies in the fact that ‘organisation’ is the phenomenon which resists entropy. The problem of differentiating between that sort of organisation which procures and protects intelligible life, and that sort of mechanical ‘order’ which includes anaesthesia and ultimately irreversible torpor, is one which may be said often to prove too difficult for American hero (1971, 144).

Thus all the cosmoptic individuals are caught in this entropic problem of differentiating. Stencil, for instance, finds it very difficult to sort out whether V. represents the protective organisation or the anaesthetic mechanical order. “The street and the hothouse; in V. were resolved by some magic, the two extremes. She frightened him” (V 487).

3.10.0 “In the most general terms,” Tanner says, “entropy is concerned with the fate of energy--the individual’s, society’s, the world’s” (1971, 144). And as the entropologists have predicted, fate of energy has a gloomy future. Nothing can be changed in between. “The only change is toward death,” as one enlightened character speaks in V., “Early and late we are in decay.” (V 460). This being the truth, both Barth and Pynchon show a preoccupation for waste, debris, decomposed or decayed materials.

3.10.1 Pynchon’s Profane finds a job to hunt alligators and rats in the sewers--“to live in human shit and alligator blood eight hours a day” (V 115). He even imagines that the alligator communicates with him. “Is it saying anything, he wondered. To me? He
wound on, feeling soon he'd start to think about collapsing and just letting the stream float him out with pornographic pictures, coffee grounds, contraceptives used and unused, shit, up through the flushing tank to the East River and across on the tide of the stone forests of Queens" (emphases added) (V 122). Tanner rightly points out the elation Pynchon feels while describing the rubbish:

No writer can write so elegiacally about, for example, or an old matters, than Pynchon, his work is categorised by many of the categories of people whom society regards as 'rubbish,' socially useless junk: bums, hoboes, drifters, transients, itinerants, vagrants, the disinherited, the disaffected, derelicts, losers, victims (1982, 20).

Incidentally, all these 'rubbish' of the society group under an organisation called 'W.A.S.T.E.' in The Crying of Lot 49. Nevertheless, when Oedipa pronounces it as 'waste,' one of the members objects and corrects her by saying that it is not a word but an acronym for a secret organisation.

3.10.2.1 Barth, like Pynchon, shows equal concern while expressing his sense of waste. We often find his characters comfortably placed in an encompassing foul atmosphere. Todd's peculiarity in this respect is that he finds what is repellent for others quite normal for him. On an occasion, he goes on explaining how he enjoys the stench of the Crabhouses and advises the readers to outgrow their conventional odour-judgements. He describes,

What Jane's car filled with as we drove over the creek bridge was . . . the stench of the crabhouses, steaming up from small mountains of red carapaces

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and other nonedible parts of the crab thrown out in the sun by the pickers. It is a smell that grabs you. I've seen many a visitor retch while, crossing the creek in summer—but like many another thing, it can be lived with: most of the natives aren't even aware of it, and I, for one, have learned to inhale it deeply and savor it in my nostrils. I did so as we drove off the bridge, and composed a mental note for Inquiry, as follows: “Olfactory pleasures being no more absolute than other kinds of pleasures, one would do well to outgrow conventional odor judgements. It is a meager standard that will call perverse that seeker of wisdom who his toe nails picked, must sniff his fingers in secret joy” (FO 205-206).

3.10.2.2 In another occasion, the bleached decomposed matters in the environment provide an excellent mood for Todd to commit suicide. He feels to sit a dried and salted sterile saint, Saint Todd of the Beach, and watch voracious gulls dissect the stranded carcasses of sandy skates and sharks, bleached and brined to stenchlessness. The locust trees by People's Trust were dusty, and mast-truck high in the High Street poplars, locusts rasped and whirred a parched dirge for my last high noon. It was a lovely day for suicide (emphases added) (FO 152).

Everything in the above paragraph is suggestive of decomposition with the general purposiveness of entropy. Further there are agents of entropy such as 'gull' and 'locust.' The gull feeds on carcasses and locust is a type of winged insect that migrates in huge swarms which destroys all the vegetables of a district.
Pynchon’s ‘Sloth’-rop also exhibits a kind of wasteful mentality. If the mind is a \textit{tabula rasa} and that one’s table would reflect one’s mind, then Slothrop’s table “is a godawful mess.” Pynchon describes:

It hasn’t been cleaned down to the original wood surface since 1942. Things have fallen roughly into layers, over a base of bureaucratic smegma that sifts steadily to the bottom, made up of millions of tiny red and brown curb of rubber eraser, pencil shavings, dried tea or coffee stains, traces of sugar and Household Milk, much cigarette ash, very fine black debris picked and flung from typewriter ribbons, decomposing library paste, broken aspirins ground to powder. Then comes a scatter of paperclips, zippo flints, rubber bands, staples, cigarette butts and crumpled packs, stray matches, pins, nubs of pens, stubs of pencils of all colors . . . bits of tape, string, chalk . . . above that a layer of forgotten memoranda, empty buff ration books, phone numbers, unanswered letters, tattered sheets of carbon paper . . . (emphases added) (GR 18)

And so on. This passage is a fine exemplification of entropy that is synonymous with disorder.

Orderly energy can be readily converted into disorderly energy. But there are natural limitations on the conversion of disorderly energy into orderly energy, as delineated by the second law of thermodynamics. An irreversible process always tends to take the system (isolated) to a state of greater disorder. An isolated system always \textit{tends} to a state of greater entropy. But a key word in the second law, as Litz points out, is “tends.” He says,
A system tends to run down—we are back to probability. There is always a small chance of a system not running down—or of a force that counteracts thermo-dynamic entropy. The possibility of such a force is embodied in Pynchon’s characters who search for order—Herbert Stencil in V., Oedipa Maas in The Crying of Lot 49, Slothrop in Gravity’s Rainbow—as well as in the reader, whom Pynchon compels to join in the search. As it has been pointed out, the search may contribute to the disorder (1981, 622).

3 11.1 Aware of this fact, the entropic individuals are perennially involved in a conflict between order and disorder or fixity and flexibility. In the words of Tanner: “Order, if it is dedicated to the procuring of ‘uniform motion,’ may in fact accelerate entropy and not counter it. This is why ‘flexibility,’ which may be translated as the continuous resistance to any imposed uniformities in motion, rather than ‘order’ is the key word for American hero” (1971, 143)

3 11.2 Thus while we find V., Burlingame and others are at ease with a flexible personality, there are others like Stencil, who are bewildered and would like to find any sort of organisation even in an entropic disintegration. “Cavities in the teeth occur for good reason, Eigenvalue reflected. But even if there are several per tooth, there’s no conscious organization there against the life of the pulp, no conspiracy. Yet we have men like Stencil, who must go about grouping the world’s random caries into cabals” (V 153).

3.11.3 Callistro is another figure who goes for order. To keep himself away from disorder, he spends seven years to weave together his hothouse jungle where he establishes a sense of order: “Hermetically sealed it was a tiny enclave of regularity in the
up to find that the screw is gone. But when he leaps out of bed in joy, his buttocks falls off. Profane does not mind his own disassemble but it should not happen when he is on the street:

To Profane, alone in the street it would always seem maybe he was looking for something too to make the fact of his own disassembly plausible as that of any machine. It was always at this point that the fear started: here that it would turn into nightmare. Because now, if he kept going down that street, not only his arms, legs, sponge brain and clock of a heart must be left behind to litter the pavement, be scattered among manhole covers (emphases added) (V 40).

3.11.6 A similar screw/screw-driver kid is Slothrop. He was sold as an infant by his father for his education for a Pavlovian experiment. But the experiment fails in the end and Slothrop, “the thermodynamic surprise” (GR 143) totally disintegrates. “The plan went wrong. He is nothing broken down instead and scattered.” “Scattered all over the Zone. It’s doubtful if he can ever be ‘found’ again, in the conventional sense of ‘positively identified and detained’” (GR 738).

3.11.7.1 However, disintegration will not pose any threat for an assembled being. Rather, it can become a casual, mechanical affair. Profane is in anticipation of such a thing. He reflects: “Someday, please God, there would be an all-electronic woman. May be her name would be Violet. Any problems with her, you could look it up in the maintenance manual. Module concept: fingers’ weight, heart’s temperature, mouth’s size out of tolerance? Remove and replace, was all” (V 385). It is noteworthy that the
"Violet" in the novel is of course, V.; first in the form of the Bad Priest and then as Vera
Meroving.

3.11.7.2 The Bad Priest, when she gets wedged under a fallen beam, is literally
disassembled by the children. To their surprise, they discover that it is a lady having an
artificial foot, a set of false teeth, a glass eye with the iris in the shape of a clock. It is
believed that if the disassembly might go on, surely her arms and breasts could be
detached; the skin of her legs be peeled away to reveal some intricate understructure of
silver openwork. V. later gets re-assembled in the form of Vera Meroving having "a glass
eye with the iris in the shape of a clock." Harris, in fact, observes every V.-referent in the
novel in relation to integration/dis-integration. He says,

Almost every referent of V. in the novel touches in some way upon
disintegration. In fact, the letter finally comes to serve as an emblem for the
entropic process itself. Entropy is the "Ultimate Plot Which Has No Name"
(226), the truth which lies hidden in the "grand Gothic Pile of inferences"(226).
Stencil has amassed from "the rathouse of history's rags and straws"(225)
(1971, 82).

3.12.0 Finally, Pynchon considers the property of entropy to be more and more in
connection with time. He says: "When I think about the property now-a-days, it is more
and more in connection with time, that human one-way time we are all stuck with locally
here, and which terminates, it is said, in death" (SL 15). Hence there are lot of references
to the passing of time and clock in Pynchon. There are some clockwork figures like
Profane who are aware that, they "are, perhaps, the lead weights of a fantastic clock,
necessary to keep it in motion, to keep an ordered sense of history and time prevailing against chaos” (V 233). There are others like Stencil to cherish “an alienation from time” (V 489). Only “God knew how many more there were with a hothouse sense of time, no knowledge of life, and at the mercy of Fortune” (V 57).

3.12.1 If Profane reflects the clockwise time, Stencil represents the anticlockwise time. The idea of clockwise/anticlockwise time further gets illustrated when Rachel observes a clock in Shoenmaker’s Clinic, opposite of which a mirror reflects its anticlockwise position. She conjectures:

here were time and reverse-time, co-existing, canceling one another exactly out.

Were there many such referent points, scattered through the world, perhaps only at nodes like this room which housed a transient population of the imperfect, the dissatisfied; did real time plus virtual or mirror time equal zero and thus serve some half-understood moral purpose? Or was it only the mirror world that counted; only a promise of a kind . . . (V 46).

Pynchon raises a pertinent question here: Which time is real? The one that indicates the running down of energy? Or the other that implies the reversal progress of entropic increase?

3.12.2 Pynchon offers a hope of an answer when we realise that V.(Vera Meroving)’s left eye glass is actually a ‘clock work.’ He describes:

A bubble blown translucent, its “white” would show up when in the socket as a half-lit sea green. A fine network of nearly microscopic fractures covered its surface. Inside were the delicately wrought wheels, springs, ratchets of a
watch, . . . Darker green and flecks of gold had been fused into twelve vaguely zodiacal shapes, placed annular on the surface of the bubble to represent the iris and also the face of the watch (V 237).

Time past and time present and even time future that has been "fused into twelve vaguely zodiacal shapes" converge in V.. But when all the other perspectives merge in V., ironically, V.'s vision/perception is bound to be a mirror image as her left eye is an artificial glass.

3.12.3 The mirror/lens/glass imagery is central to Barth too. Giles Goat Boy--George, "passes all his time at the top of a tower looking at the men and women outside through all sorts of lenses, microscopes and telescopes, through a huge camera obscura into which the images of life outside were projected, ten times more luminous and interesting than the real thing" (GGB XXIII). Eierkopf has got an observatory and he makes use of typical lenses. Eierkopfian lens, as it is called, is a mated pair of lenses, actually, the one "synthetic," or panoramical, the other "analytic," or microscopical, would resolve and focus--and that inconsistently (GGB 430-431).

3.12.4 Again all these blurred visions, microscopic observations lead to the final question: Which is the correct way to perceive reality? And do Pynchon and Barth conceive reality in an ordered or a disordered fashion? The observation Fredrick R. Karl makes for Pynchon, in this regard, is absolutely true for Barth also. He remarks: "Pynchon uses order and disorder as tensions. It is incorrect to see him as an advocate either of entropy (disorder) or of order gained through technology. His area of play is dualistic" (1983, 363).
To sum up, the Protean Wo/Man in her/his struggle to establish a fluid identity becomes fragile, immobile and pathological. Most of the characters of Pynchon and Barth suffer from strange maladies labelled 'entropy' and 'cosmopsis,' respectively. Entropy indicates the decline of energy or the amount of disorder created by it. Cosmopsis implies a cosmic awareness in extremity that could paralyse the mind and the body. Those who suffer from these diseases, firstly, have a sense of the apocalypse--of the individual as well as the universal death; hence they are nihilistic in their attitudes and act agents of death. Secondly, they lose desire for even the basic and instinctual activities. Thirdly, they identify their innate stillness with the inanimate and slowly attempt integration with it. Conversely, the inanimate offers a perfect substitute/surrogate for the dis-integrated animate which in turn helps the former to gain supremacy over the latter. Fourthly, they involve themselves with various kinds of movement without any progress. In contrast to them are the homeostatic group who resist any motion sheerly by upholding relative values of human existence. But they are unaware that entropy imposes a servitude of all energies; active or passive, physical or mental. This final predicament that everything leads to decay/waste has contributed to the excessive scatological/excremental vision of the authors. Lastly, entropy/cosmopsis above all exemplifies the tension between order and disorder in reality and that the approach of both Barth and Pynchon to this problem is dualistic. Battling to actualise identity in a binary world of order/disorder the cosmoptic/entropic protean wo/men are in need of control. Hence these writers offer two remedies conditioned by a control system, namely, 'Cybernetics' (Pynchon) and 'Mythotherapy' (Barth) which the following chapter posits to explore and explain.